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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 022352

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E.O. 12958: DECL: ASS: 03/03/18
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SUBJECT: APPROACHING THE EU IN ADVANCE OF THE MARCH 10-11
FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING (GAERC)

REF: N/A

¶1. (U) Classified by William Lucas, Office Director,
EUR/ERA. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d).

¶2. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 10.

¶3. (SBU) Summary: EU Foreign Ministers will hold their next General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting in Brussels on March 10-11. We expect the agenda to include: Western Balkans (Serbia/Kosovo), Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Georgia, and Iran. Posts are requested to include the SIPDIS caption on their response cables. A background section covering some of these issues is provided prior to a section containing talking points. Points are to be delivered as soon as possible at the appropriate level to EU members only. Other posts should not/not deliver these points.

BACKGROUND

ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS

¶4. (SBU) In light of the recent events in Gaza and the suspension of negotiations by the Palestinian Authority, our focus is on the resumption of negotiations and rebuilding the momentum generated at the November 27 Annapolis Conference and the December 17 Paris Donors' Conference. We continue to encourage expanded budgetary support for the PA, especially by Arab states. The next AHLC meeting on May 2 in the United Kingdom will provide a good opportunity to push donors to meet and expand their budgetary support to the PA. Secretary Rice has made clear, both privately and publicly, that we must ensure continuous progress in Israeli-Palestinians political negotiations on core issues even in the face of unhelpful developments. Our goals remain Israeli-Palestinian Roadmap implementation, Palestinian capacity building (the mission of Quartet Representative Blair and LTG Keith

Dayton's Security Sector Reform), Arab outreach to Israel and support for this process, and progress on political talks between Abbas and Olmert and their negotiating teams.

SYRIA/LEBANON

15. (SBU) We should encourage our European partners to join us in providing meaningful support for the Siniora government, including unified international pressure on Syria and the opposition to allow an immediate and unconditional presidential election, funding to support Lebanese security services and mitigate Lebanese debt problems, and high-level visits and statements of support. We also urge additional EU financial support for the UN Special Tribunal on Lebanon, which will help end the era of impunity for political assassinations and deter further violence. We discourage post-Annapolis engagement of Syria and urge High Representative Solana to serve as the sole point-of-contact between Damascus and EU Member States. Syrian government actions have been increasingly detrimental to the peace process, best demonstrated by the January 23-25 "anti-Annapolis" conference hosted by Damascus-based rejectionist groups and facilitated by the Syrian government. Two Syrian government ministers attended the conference even while Dutch FM Verhagen visited Damascus. Isolation-not engagement-is the best way to improve Syrian behavior.

ZIMBABWE

16. (C) The ruling and opposition parties have failed to agree on establishing a level playing field for the March 29 presidential and parliamentary elections after nearly a year of talks facilitated by South African President Mbeki on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). President Bush expressed disappointment on February 14 that the South African government had not been "more proactive in its intercession to help the people of Zimbabwe." During his trip to Africa, he reiterated that "the people of Zimbabwe deserve a government that serves their interests and recognizes their basic human rights and holds free and fair elections."

17. (C) We are particularly concerned that the increase in state-sponsored violence and intimidation over the past year will continue through the election. Credible international monitors are needed to document the regime's use of violence and intimidation. British Foreign Secretary Miliband has publicly called for international

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monitors for the Zimbabwean elections. Unfortunately, Mugabe has stated he will only invite "friendly" countries, to include SADC members, which have been reluctant to criticize Mugabe in past election-observation efforts.

18. (C) We have expressed our concerns to the African Union (AU) and SADC leaders and hope that EU countries will do so as well. It would be helpful if the EU could focus its efforts on getting a SADC-Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) observation delegation into Zimbabwe. SADC-PF has been objective and critical of past elections in Zimbabwe and would like to monitor the upcoming elections.

IRAN

19. (C) On February 6, EU experts prepared a list of 19 new entities and 15 new individuals to be designated under the EU's Common Policy on Restrictive Measures Against Iran. The EU Member States agreed that the new designations would not actually be implemented until after the approval of the third UNSCR, but they planned to go ahead with preparations so that EU foreign ministers could approve the new measures at this (March 10-11) GAERC. Unfortunately, the Italians and Cypriots subsequently insisted that nothing could be done-not even technical

preparations for the new designations-until the third UNSCR was adopted. We would like the EU both to implement the new resolution as quickly as possible and to move forward with complementary autonomous actions immediately.

¶10. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Please deliver the following points to the appropriate MFA official(s) as soon as possible (in advance of March 10-11 GAERC).

BEGIN NON-PAPER TEXT

WESTERN BALKANS

-- Despite efforts of Serb hardliners to provoke violence and protests, we assess that overall situation in Kosovo is stable and positive. Neither the Kosovo government nor the Albanian majority has responded to provocations in any way. In fact, the Kosovo government has passed nine pieces of legislation implementing key elements of the Ahtisaari plan. KFOR and UNMIK are coordinating well on the ground.

-- We welcome the participation of many EU states in the standing up of the ISG on February 28 and the naming of Pieter Feith, the EUSR for Kosovo, as the International Civilian Representative for Kosovo.

-- We welcome the early recognitions and declarations of intent to recognize by a sizeable majority of EU members and look forward to additional recognitions.

-- The U.S. is committed to participating in the vital ESDP Kosovo civpol mission (EULEX).

-- We look for continued EU support in pressing the UN and UNMIK to respond robustly to Serbian challenges and provocations. With UNSCR 1244 still in effect, UNMIK has critical responsibilities. Serbia is probing for weaknesses in an attempt to harden the partition of northern Kosovo and establish a de facto Kosovo-Serb "entity" in Kosovo. KFOR is responding appropriately, by working with UNMIK police to turn back demonstrators at the border and preventing violence in North Mitrovica. We are alarmed, however, by UNMIK's early failure to control borders, unwillingness to keep out Serb government officials who condone violence, and continued failure to collect customs at the border. We must press UNMIK to remain vigilant against future provocations and fulfill its 1244 mandate robustly; these responsibilities are the same now as they were before February 17.

-- We encourage the EU to continue International Civilian Office (ICO) operations in North Mitrovica. The safety of UN and EU personnel in North Mitrovica is paramount, but we must also ensure that international operations there continue. In these critical first weeks, we must make a clear stand.

-- Undoubtedly there will be challenges ahead, but our assessment is that long-term stability and democratic development in Southeast Europe will be achieved by implementing UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari's proposal for supervised independence. We look forward to working with the EU to develop Kosovar institutions and community development offers the best hope for success. The U.S. looks forward to working with the EU, World Bank, IMF, and other potential donors to assist Kosovo in the post-independence transition and longer-term.

-- It is essential to unequivocally condemn provocative language from Serbia and Republika Srpska. We must urge Belgrade to avoid actions which will cause long term harm to its prospects for Euro-Atlantic integration. We must also continue to reject any suggestion that Kosovo independence has implications for the future of the Republika Srpska and closely manage the dangerous separatist statements of RS Prime Minister Dodik and the RS National Assembly.

-- We welcome continued EU efforts to offer Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina an EU membership perspective through signature of Stability and Association Agreements, provided both follow through on key reforms. Both Serbia and BiH would be valued members of the Euro-Atlantic community, and we encourage them to quickly take the necessary steps.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS

-- We appreciate the EU's support for the Annapolis process and the strong EU financial assistance for the Palestinians announced at the Paris Donors' Conference (\$650 million for 2008). We welcome the EU's transition from the Temporary International Mechanism to PEGASE, a mechanism to provide direct European assistance to the Palestinian Authority, and to focus assistance on development and reform priorities identified by PM Fayyad before the Paris Conference. We also look forward to the next Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee in May in the United Kingdom.

-- We must sustain the momentum generated at Annapolis and Paris, especially in light of recent events in Gaza. Secretary Rice's March 4-5 trip to the region aimed to

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help advance Israeli-Palestinian talks and discuss the need for real changes on the ground. The Secretary and the President remain personally engaged on this priority issue and President Bush has said that he will return to the region, possibly as soon as May.

-- We believe it is particularly important at this time to achieve meaningful progress on the ground to build confidence between the parties. Tony Blair's team has identified a number of excellent projects. We need to identify and address any obstacles to get these projects moving forward.

-- As agreed with the parties at Annapolis, the U.S. will take on the role of monitoring and judging Roadmap implementation. LTG William Fraser, who is heading this effort, has held two rounds of talks with the parties already and will return to the region on a regular basis to work with the parties and our diplomatic missions to discuss progress on Roadmap implementation.

-- On Gaza, we are deeply concerned by the continued and increased firing of rockets into southern Israel, as well as the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. We have stressed to Israel the importance of continued humanitarian aid to Gaza and are encouraging Israel, Egypt, and the PA to work together to find a solution for Gaza that ensures security for all three parties, empowers the PA, maintains pressure on Hamas, ensures the basic needs of Gazans are being met, and works to bring about circumstances that will allow for implementation of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

-- We will continue to consult closely with our European partners and with the Quartet over the coming months.

SYRIA/LEBANON

-- We urge the EU and its Member States to press Syria to stop blocking Lebanese elections and allow the Lebanese to find a solution to the current political impasse. Elections must be allowed to occur immediately and without pre-condition.

-- We urge European states to assist in strengthening Lebanon's institutions, including the parliament, cabinet, and military, through statements of support for their legitimacy and continued financial assistance. The Lebanese opposition, with support from Syria and Iran, is trying to erode Lebanon's constitutional institutions,

thereby undermining Lebanese sovereignty and allowing the reassertion of Syrian influence.

-- We discourage post-Annapolis engagement of Syria by EU Member States. Syrian government (SARG) actions in past weeks have been increasingly detrimental to the peace process, best demonstrated by the January 23-25 "anti-Annapolis" conference hosted by Damascus-based rejectionist groups and facilitated by the Syrian government. Two Syrian government ministers attended the conference.

-- The repeated visits of Western diplomats to Damascus have only served to embolden the Asad regime. Since Syria's participation in Annapolis, it has received multiple European ministers in Damascus, and Syrian officials have been received in Europe. And yet, Syrian interference in Lebanon, support for Hizballah, and facilitation of foreign fighters to Iraq continues apace, while repression of Syrian democracy activists at home has increased.

PAKISTAN

-- We note that the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz agreed in principle February 21 to form a coalition, but have a number of issues to sort out. These include identifying a Prime Minister and determining how they will interact with President Musharraf, who we believe will continue to have an important role to play in Pakistan's government. There could be an extended period of inter-party negotiations before a new government is formed.

-- We urge EU support for the creation of a government that will constructively address Pakistan's serious economic and security challenges, and for expressions of support to work closely with the new Prime Minister.

AFGHANISTAN

-- We note that the EU recently announced that the initial group of 195 police trainers will be fully deployed in Afghanistan by April.

-- We welcome this mission and are pleased to work together on police training activities.

-- We believe that a well-trained, professional police force is essential to the long-term stability of Afghanistan.

-- With 82,000 poorly-trained police assigned to protect 31 million Afghans, it is clear that for the quality of the police force to improve, many more international police trainers are needed. Accordingly, we hope that you will seriously consider increasing the size of your police training mission.

-- Moreover, since most police are assigned to isolated and remote areas, trainers need to work at the district level to mentor police officers on the job. We strongly encourage you to consider deploying trainers into the districts - recognizing that this will require an additional logistical and security commitment.

-- We also encourage you to expand training to include other elements of the justice sector, particularly the judiciary.

ZIMBABWE

-- There is an urgent need for independent international election monitors, particularly from Africa. Regional missions have played a key role in observing a number of recent African elections.

-- We welcome whatever actions the EU can take to press

for Mugabe to immediately invite SADC-Parliamentary Forum, the AU, and other African regional organizations to deploy substantial and objective monitoring missions in Zimbabwe.

GEORGIA

-- January 5 was the first truly competitive presidential election in Georgia. Despite significant irregularities, the election was consistent with most ODIHR and Council of Europe commitments and shared standards. The Central Election Commission answered specific concerns raised by our own observation team and expressed a willingness to improve election procedures. Such improvements are crucial for Georgian democracy and for its NATO aspirations.

-- Our cooperation with the EU during the election campaign was outstanding and very productive. We need to keep working closely to ensure that the May parliamentary elections represent a significant improvement over the presidential campaign and balloting.

-- We take seriously Russian statements about possible recognition of Abkhazia, and have expressed our concern with Russian officials. We hope EU members are conveying a similar message to Moscow. We welcome recent, positive steps toward improving Georgian-Russian relations and hope they will continue.

-- We welcome whatever actions the EU can take to reduce the isolation of the Abkhaz people through such initiatives as the establishment of EU information centers, the deployment of EU police to the region, or helping develop commercial and transport links.

-- We continue to support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, including its quest for NATO MAP.

IRAN

-- The adoption of a third Iran sanctions UNSCR and the release of the IAEA's 22 February report have made EU action on Iran imperative. The report confirms that Iran continues to refuse to comply with its UNSC obligations to suspend its proliferation sensitive nuclear activities, including enrichment-related activities, and discusses documentation available to the IAEA that describes Iranian efforts to develop a nuclear warhead. Olli Heinonen, IAEA Deputy Director General for Safeguards, elaborated in a technical briefing on the report on 25 February and showed IAEA Member States some of the documents and other materials in question.

-- Iran's response thus far has been to claim that these documents are "fabrications" and the result of "baseless allegations." DDG Heinonen stood behind these documents and stated explicitly that, in light of the fact that information on Iran's potential weaponization activities was provided to the IAEA from multiple member states, his inspectors could not/not conclude that these documents were fabrications.

-- Iran must make a full disclosure of any nuclear weapons-related activities and facilitate IAEA verification that those activities have ceased. We encourage the EU to highlight these points from the report and express public and private support for international efforts to compel Iran to cooperate with the IAEA and comply with its UNSC obligations.

-- We urge the EU to adopt the new UN sanctions as quickly as possible and when the EU does so, we encourage it to go beyond the specific lists of individuals and entities designated in the resolution, as well as to make mandatory and expand the scope of any provisions that are left as voluntary in the resolution, as the EU has done in the past.

-- We also encourage the EU to move quickly to adopt additional autonomous sanctions. We support both additional EU designations under existing mechanisms and new sanctions. Quick EU action will reinforce the momentum created by the third sanctions UNSCR, make clear to Tehran the price of continued defiance of UNSC requirements and IAEA obligations, and set an example for others to follow.

END NON-PAPER TEXT
RICE